

JOSH HARDER
10TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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August 5, 2020

State Superintendent Tony Thurmond
California Department of Education
1430 N St #5901
Sacramento, CA 95814

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Students in my district and across the Central Valley are facing ever-growing levels of stress and anxiety as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I write today to urge you to ensure that our schools are adequately staffed with mental health professionals and counselors for the upcoming school year.

It remains unclear what the long-term effects the COVID-19 crisis will have on our nation's youth. We know that students in my district and across the Central Valley will need the aid of school-provided counselors and mental health professionals now more than ever. Research has shown that a student's [long-term academic performance](#) and [attendance improves](#) when they have access to school counselors and mental health professionals. However, in our state, the [average student to counselor ratio is 622-to-1](#). This is simply not good enough. Our students are counting on us to provide them with a quality education, and we cannot accomplish this if we do not provide them with access to school counselors and mental health professionals.

School counselors and mental health professionals are needed now more than ever as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic – and Congress has given you the resources to provide these services to our student population. The CARES Act provided California nearly \$4 billion dollars in funding to be allocated toward education. [This included \\$1.741 billion for K-12 schools, and \\$369 million for the Governor's emergency education relief grants.](#) School districts across the Central Valley need this funding to adequately staff our schools with counselors and other mental health professionals for the upcoming school year. Time and time again our students in the Central Valley have been left behind – and we simply cannot afford to let this happen yet again, which is why I urge you to use the funding made available to you in the CARES Act to ensure that students in my district are provided with access to school counselors and mental health professionals for the upcoming school year.

Students and their families in my district and across the Central Valley are depending on us as leaders in our state to provide a quality education, and that means ensuring that our students have access to school counselors and mental health professionals. Again, I urge you to ensure that our schools are adequately staffed with mental health professionals and counselors. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Josh Harder
United States Representative (CA-10)